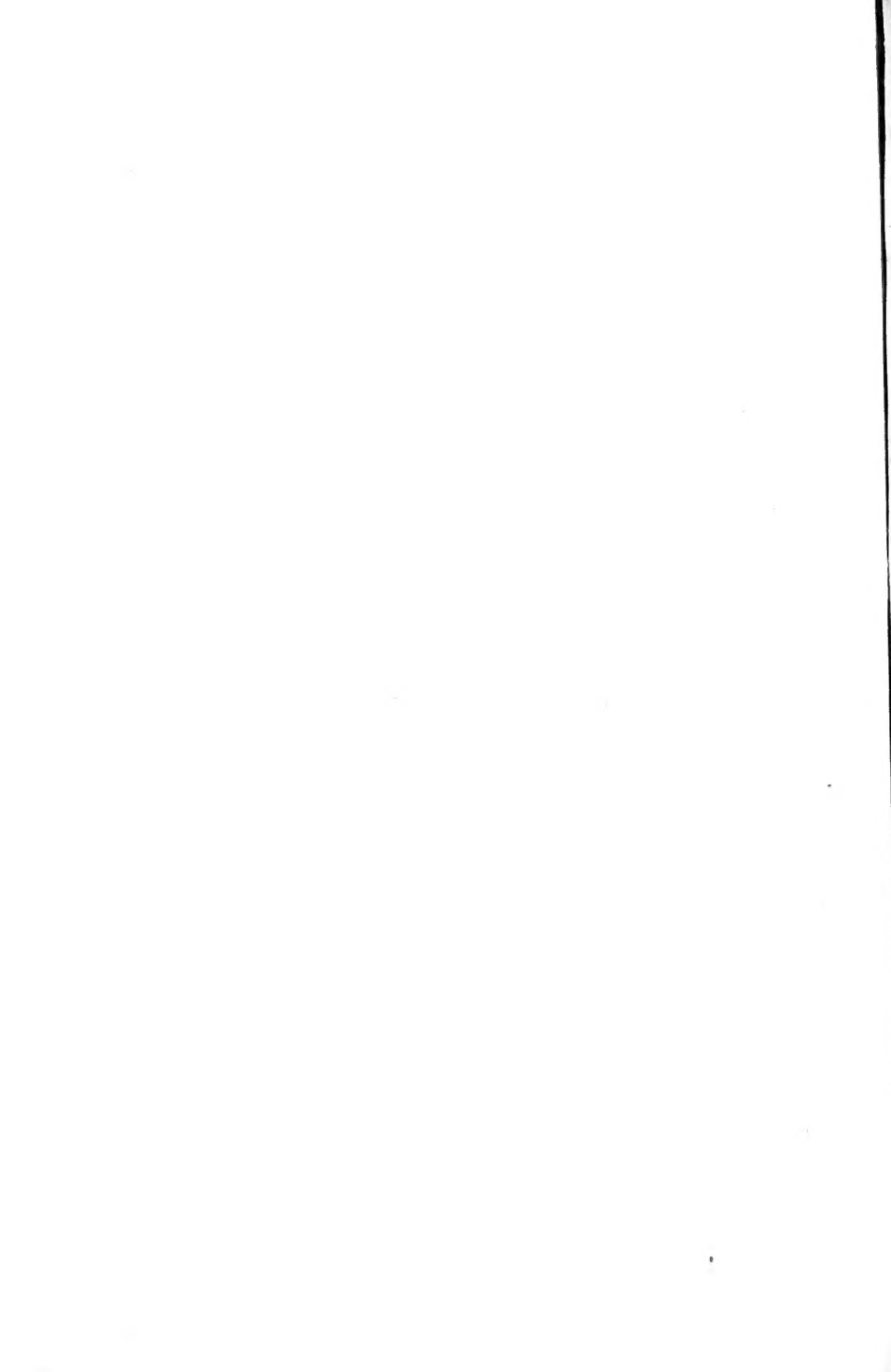




PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

CLERGY AND LAITY

OF THE

ARCHDIOCESE OF HALIFAX,

BY

THE MOST REV. CORNELIUS O'BRIEN, D. D.,

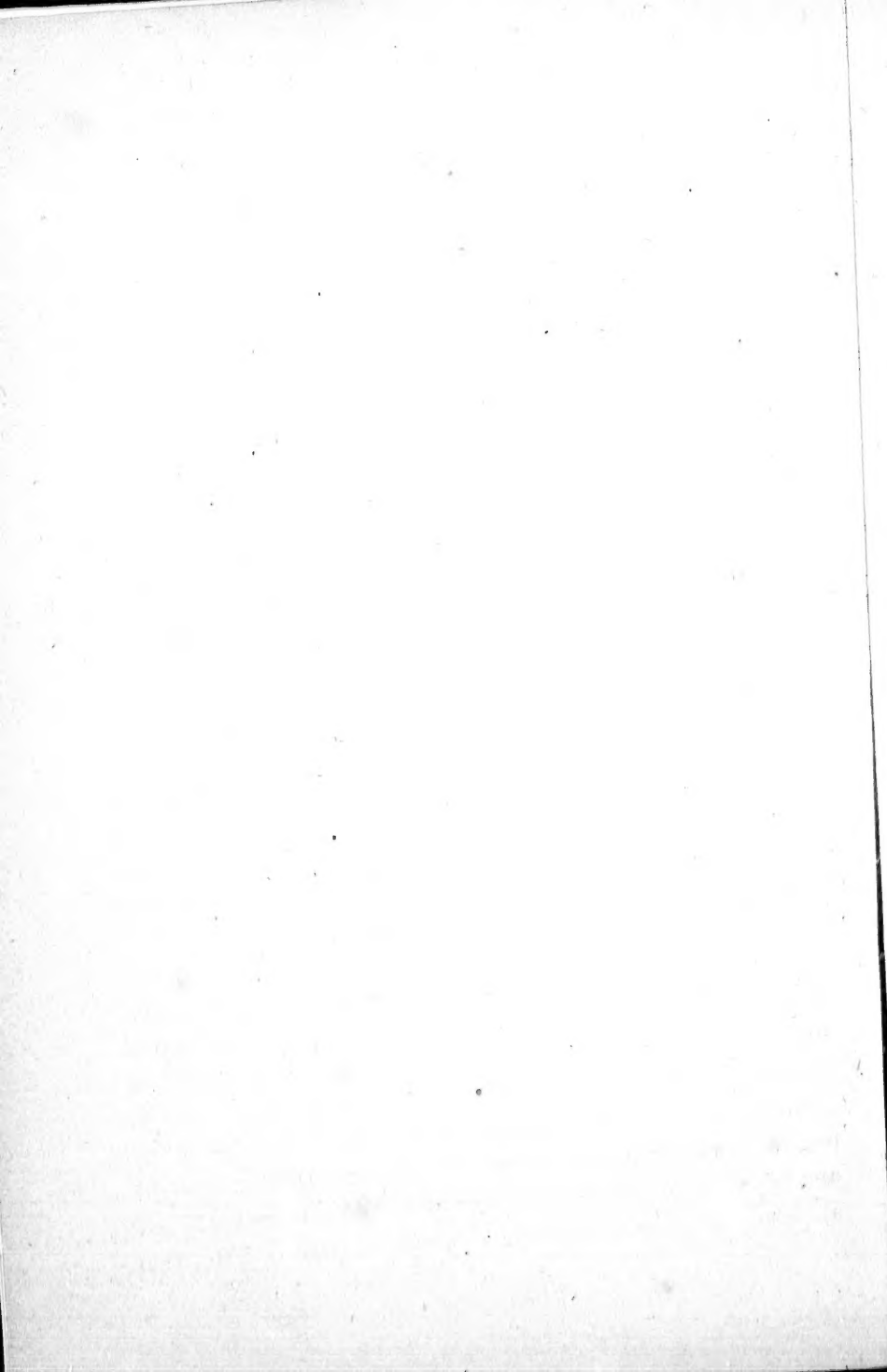
Archbishop of Halifax.

HALIFAX, N. S.

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*CORNELIUS, by the Grace of God, and favour
of the Apostolic See, Archbishop Elect of
Halifax.*

**To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Halifax, health
and benediction in the Lord :**

DEARLY BELOVED :

Called by the voice of the Supreme Pastor of souls on earth to assume the duties and the responsibilities of the Episcopate we hasten to address to you our first words of pastoral greeting. For nine long months the Diocese of Halifax had been grieving for the loss of its gentle, zealous and well-loved Archbishop ; and, although it has now thrown aside its widow's weeds, and has raised again an anthem of joy, the memory of Dr. Hannan is not forgotten, but lives as freshly as ever in the hearts of his grateful children. And just it is that so it should be ; for a life-long devotion to duty merits a life-long remembrance.

But, although the man dies, the office lives on. The Church of God is a divine institution, whilst its members are mortal. Death can gain no victory over it, for death cannot destroy its supernatural life. Unlike institutions of human device, which change and perish like their authors, the Catholic Church, partaking of the undying years of its Founder, keeps on its ceaseless and unchanging course. "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark, xvii, 15) are at once its mandate and its divine charter. "He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned," prove its claim to our obedience : whilst the promise, " Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," (Matt.. xxviii, 20) is its warranty of endurance. Thus chartered, thus empowered, thus guaranteed, the Church was established among men, and by right divine took its place in the world. Its mission was co-extensive with the world, and co-eval with all time. Wherever there was a soul to be taught thither its mandate extended. It lived not by the sufferance of Princes, and it asked not their permission to teach and to baptize. Its power being from the Lord of all, no mortal has a right to interfere with its heaven-given commission. It speaks to the souls of men with divine authority, but their freedom of will is left untouched. They may, as many, alas ! do, reject its teachings and revile its practices ; but they do this at their peril of falling under the awful threat, " He that believeth not shall be condemned."

Man may boast of his free will : it is indeed a noble prerogative when nobly employed, but he should bear in mind that God, also, is free. Freely he created man ; freely he prepared for him the eternal joys of heaven ; and he is free to prescribe the means through which alone man may attain to that everlasting happiness. Whilst, then, we are free to accept or to reject the conditions under which our salvation may be secured, God is free to condemn us if we refuse subjection to his will. If this were borne in mind, men would see the fallacy of making the freedom of the human will an argument to prove that the nature of one's religion is a matter of indifference.

In the question of religion we have no choice. Had Jesus Christ simply died for mankind, without teaching any truths, or promulgating any laws,---had he merely told us to love God above all, and our neighbors as ourselves, the case would have been different. Man might then have chosen whatever form of worship seemed to best express that command. But Christ's mission was twofold,—to redeem and to teach. The former he accomplished by his passion and death; the latter was fulfilled, first by his own preaching, and then by founding a society, or Church, to which he confided the truths he had taught. He gave at the same time to that Church a command to preach his gospel to every creature, and a pledge of its triumph by promising to remain with it for all time, even to the consummation of the world. Thus religion ceased to be a matter of choice; for Christ, as God, had a right to exact our obedience, and a right to prescribe the conditions under which we might enjoy the fruits of his redemption. To deny this is to deny God. Hence we are not at liberty to make a religion for ourselves; we must accept the one which His Church was to preach to every creature. He exacts the same obedience to the Church as to himself; he makes its voice one with his own. "He that heareth you, heareth Me." He clothes it with his own power: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John, xx, 21). It is clearly, then, the duty of men to obey the voice of God's Holy Church.

As there can be no properly formed society without a recognized head, Jesus Christ, who intended that His Church should be a perfect organization, constituted St. Peter and his successors its supreme visible heads and His vice-gerents on

earth. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," are words which proclaim the place and power of the Supreme Pontiffs. For they have inherited Peter's apostolate with Peter's throne and prerogatives. Peter died, but his power was transmitted, even as were the mission and mandate of "preaching the Gospel to every creature."

Hence, from the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, where Peter's voice ended the discussion and decided the controversy, down through the ages to our own time, the Pope has ever stood forth as the central figure of Christianity, and the infallible head of the Christian religion. "Who heareth you, heareth Me," is as true of Leo as of Peter; for it is men, not principles, that die.

The power of the Apostolate, vested in the successors of 'St. Peter, was ever exercised by them. From Rome went forth duly commissioned teachers to all nations of the earth. From Rome Europe derived its religion, its laws and its civilization. From Rome was ever heard a voice, which no fears or persecutions could still, proclaiming the eternal truths through which alone peace here and happiness hereafter can be attained. That voice may be disregarded, even as was the voice of Christ; but the unchanging word remains: "He that believeth not shall be condemned."

The divinely constituted authority of the Pope sends me, as it has sent thousands of others, to rule a portion of Christ's kingdom on earth. By no act,—by no seeking of my own, do I come. Fully aware of my unworthiness, I trembled at the mandate. There was, however, one thought that cheered and consoled me. The golden bond of Faith united us, though personally unknown. You knew me not; but you knew that I

came clothed with lawful power, and charged to preach the Gospel taught by the Apostles. I knew you not; but I knew you were faithful children of Holy Church, and submissive to her gentle rule. New and tender relations, born of the act of consecration, have sprung up between us. An awful responsibility of ruling in prudence, in justice and in charity, rests on me; and an awful responsibility rests on you of due docility and obedience. I can only cry out in the beautiful words of Christ's prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me, that they may be one sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth."—(John xvii).

We have no strange gospel to announce to you; no startling and vague theories to enunciate. Christ, and him crucified, do we preach; in his cross, and in it alone, do we glory. Jews may have been scandalized, and gentiles may have laughed, at his Passion; but we know that through his death we were redeemed, and through his teachings we are to be sanctified. The gift of faith received in Baptism, enlightens the soul, and reveals to it much that is hidden from the would be wise and prudent ones of the world. On every side a cry goes up from weary mortals, vainly seeking a rest which they cannot find. The whirl of modern life leaves little room for thoughts of heaven. A restless pursuit after riches and worldly enjoyments has violently divorced innumerable hearts from that God, for whom they were made. Souls, created with an unlimited capacity for happiness and that yearn for untold joys, have, by false maxims and unsound, though brilliant, theories, been led to seek their heaven on earth; and have forgotten, or, perhaps denied a

future state. Disappointed, restless, and wearied, as all such must sooner, or later be, they raise a cry in their wilderness of misery, and ask with hopeless tone "Is life worth living?" This is at once the consequence and the punishment of a denial of Christ's Gospel. The cross of daily life is only heavy for those who revile the Cross of Christ; and the path of life is dreary only to those who look not to the road of Calvary. Life is insupportable only for those who do not lean on God, and who seek to smother within themselves the voice of Conscience and of Religion. The Apostle St. Paul (Rom. 1. 25) speaking of those who "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator," shows the wretched and degraded state into which they fell. They "became vain in their thoughts; and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise they became fools. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness. As they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do these things which are not convenient." This picture of sin and shame drawn by the inspired writer, is that of the Gentile world before the coming of our Saviour. That world was not unlike many in the present day. It had its pagan civilization; arts and sciences were held in high esteem; literature of a high order of excellence was not wanting; an outward polish of manners threw a thin veil over the seething mass of inward corruption. Now as then many "like not to have God in their knowledge;" now as then many change "the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator. What wonder, then, that they should be delivered

over to a "reprobate sense," that their lives should be unhappy and dreary ; that they should be " foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, and without mercy ?"

The Church of Christ which was an ark of safety to the old heathen world, is still the tower of refuge from the errors, and crimes, and wretchedness of modern unbelief. In it the shadows of life are lit up by a ray cast down from the heavenly source of eternal light ; in it the intellect is perfected by the knowledge of unchanging truths, and rests securely in the infallible certainty of Christ's promise ; in it crosses become light ; trials and afflictions are sweetened by the reflection that the sufferings of this life are not to be compared to the weight of future glory which will be revealed in all those who observe its teachings.

Do you then, dearly beloved, during this holy season of Lent, which is a special time for prayer and penance, strive to have " God in your knowledge." For Him you have been created ; for Him you should live and labour ; against Him you should never sin. Remember that " the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all impiety and injustice." Wash your souls in the blood of the Crucified, by receiving worthily the Holy Sacraments of Penance and Communion. Stir up the grace within you by fervent prayer, by some acts of mortification, by good and pious resolutions. Make the salvation of your souls the one first and chief work of your lives ; let the light of your virtuous example so shine before men that the darkness of unbelief may be dispelled, even as it was put to flight by the faith of the early Christians in Rome, so that all men may know the true Church, and all souls may praise the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren.

This Pastoral shall be read in all the Churches of this Diocese, as soon as possible after its reception by the Pastor.

† C. O'BRIEN.

E. F. MURPHY, *Secretary*.

HALIFAX, N. S., Ash Wednesday, 1883.

